



Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

**FACTORS INFLUENCING FRONTLINE EMPLOYEES'
SATISFACTION AT SERVICE COUNTER IN PUBLIC HEALTH
CARE - A CASE STUDY IN SARAWAK GENERAL HOSPITAL
(SGH)**

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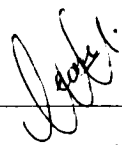
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**FACTORS INFLUENCING FRONTLINE EMPLOYEES' SATISFACTION
AT SERVICE COUNTER IN PUBLIC HEALTH CARE – A CASE STUDY IN
SARAWAK GENERAL HOSPITAL (SGH)**

by

Chua Lian Choo

This project is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a
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ABSTRACT

FACTORS INFLUENCING FRONTLINE EMPLOYEES' SATISFACTION AT SERVICE COUNTER IN PUBLIC HEALTH CARE – A CASE STUDY IN SARAWAK GENERAL HOSPITAL (SGH)

CHUA LIAN CHOO

This research aims to identify factors influencing frontline employees' satisfaction at service counter in public health care. The first specific objective of this research is to measure the level of satisfaction among the frontline employees at service counter. Second is to identify the essential factor of personal satisfaction, workload, team spirit, training and professional support in influencing frontline employees' satisfaction. Third is to examine the influence of the demographic factors on the frontline employees' satisfaction. Fourth is to determine most dominant factor that influence the frontline employees' satisfaction. There were 94 respondents from frontline employees at service counter whom had completed a self-administered questionnaire, which was taken and modified from the questionnaire of Chou, Boldy & Lee (2002) on variables affecting their satisfaction. These variables were personal satisfaction, workload, team spirit, training and professional support. Data obtained from the hospital were analyzed using Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 14.0 with Independent Sample t-test, One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Pearson Correlation Coefficient and Multiple Regression Analysis. Overall, SGH service counter frontline employees' satisfaction level is satisfied. Results also indicated that there were no significant difference between demographic characteristics and the frontline employees' satisfaction. However, results revealed that there were relationships between variables being studied which were personal satisfaction, workload, team spirit, training and professional support with frontline employees' satisfaction. The dominant factor which was found affected frontline employees' satisfaction was training. This research had advanced the understanding of frontline employees' satisfactions and revealed the factors that influence the employees' satisfaction. Thus, it enables management to take actions in order to increase the frontline employees' satisfaction and motivate them to perform well in their job.

ABSTRAK

FAKTOR –FAKTOR YANG MEMPENGARUHI KEPUASAN PERSONEL BARISAN HADAPAN DI KAUNTER SERVIS DI SEKTOR PERUBATAN AWAM – SATU KAJIAN DI HOSPITAL UMUM SARAWAK (HUS)

CHUA LIAN CHOO

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenalpasti faktor- faktor yang mempengaruhi kepuasan personel barisan hadapan di kaunter servis di pusat perubatan awam. Objektif spesifik kajian yang pertama ialah untuk mengukur tahap kepuasan personel barisan hadapan di kaunter servis. Kedua ialah untuk mengenalpasti pengaruh faktor-faktor kepuasan personel, beban kerja, semangat berpasukan, latihan dan sokongan professional dalam mempengaruhi kepuasan personel barisan hadapan. Ketiga ialah untuk mengkaji pengaruh faktor demografi terhadap kepuasan personel barisan hadapan. Keempat ialah untuk menentukan faktor yang paling dominan yang mempengaruhi kepuasan personel barisan hadapan. Terdapat 94 responden pekerja kaunter servis yang telah mengisi borang soal selidik berkenaan dengan pembolehubah yang mempengaruhi kepuasan mereka yang dipetik dan diubahsuai dari Chou, Boldy dan Lee (2002). Pembolehubah- pembolehubah ini ialah kepuasan personel, beban kerja, semangat berpasukan, latihan dan sokongan professional. Data yang diperolehi daripada hospital telah dianalisis menggunakan Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) Versi 14.0 dengan ujian Independent Sample t-test, One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Pearson Correlation Coefficient dan Multiple Regression Analysis. Secara keseluruhan, tahap kepuasan personal barisan hadapan di kaunter servis adalah berpuas hati. Hasil kajian ini mendedahkan bahawa tidak terdapat perkaitan antara faktor- faktor demografi dengan kepuasan personal barisan hadapan. Walau bagaimanapun, hasil kajian ini mendedahkan yang terdapatnya perkaitan antara pembolehubah- pembolehubah kepuasan personel, beban kerja, semangat berpasukan, latihan dan sokongan professional dengan kepuasan personal barisan hadapan. Faktor paling dominan yang didapati paling mempengaruhi kepuasan personal barisan hadapan ialah latihan. Kajian ini telah meningkatkan kefahaman terhadap kepuasan personal barisan hadapan serta mendedahkan faktor- faktor yang mempengaruhi kepuasan personal barisan hadapan. Maka, ini membolehkan pihak pengurusan mengambil tindakan dalam meningkatkan kepuasan personal barisan hadapan dan memotivasikan mereka untuk bekerja dengan lebih cemerlang lagi.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Today's business is in dynamic change mode, with the increasing number of competitors and new challenges as it moves towards the globalization. Thus, organizations need to be wise enough to compete and survive in the market. Besides making profit, an organization's employees or known as internal customers also play important roles in organizations' survival and development. "An internal customer is defined as anyone in an organization who is supplied with products or services by distinct organizational departments or by persons working in them" (Bruhn, 2003). The reason why employees especially the frontline employees are very essential to organization is that they will influence the operations on providing services to customers. Frontline employees are the ones who will have direct contact with customers, and thus will affect the overall customers' perceptions, satisfaction and retention towards the particular organization. This fact is also supported by Rust and Stewart (1996) stated that customers who receive better service express fewer complaints and thereby create fewer problems for employees.

“When companies put employees and customers first, their employees are satisfied, their customers are loyal, their profits increase, and their continued success is sustained” (Heskett et al. cited in Bailey and Dandrade, 1995). Therefore, in order to succeed, employee satisfaction has to be taken into consideration. Locke (cited in O’Neill, 2005) defines employee satisfaction as a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experiences. Monitoring employee satisfaction is an essential prerequisite both for improving internal supplier-customer relationships and for attaining higher external customer satisfaction, retention, and long-term financial success (Bruhn, 2003).

Many industries either producing goods or services, had come to realize the importance of the employees in order to maintain customer satisfaction, customer loyalty and profitability. There is no exception for health care industry. “The health care industry in recent years has restructured its service delivery system in order to survive in an unforgiving environment resulting from maturation of the industry, reduced funding and increased competition (Emanuel and Dubler, 1995; Taylor, 1994 cited in Choi, Lee and Lee, 2005).

In Malaysia, public sector plays an important role in providing health care services to people while taking into consideration of the needy ones. According to Yon (2002), the Ministry of Health is the main provider of public health care services in the country and accounts for 53 per cent of the government’s total health funding allocation (cited in Noor Hazilah, 2005). While patients are the primary and ultimate customers of the health care provider, and providers exist to meet the real and perceived needs of these customers, it is the quality of the provider’s internal processes that ultimately determines how those needs are met (Swinehart & Smith, 2005). Thus, it is essential to satisfy the employees’ needs, as this will motivate them to provide an excellence service to customers. Moreover, frontline personnel are normally the key to clients’ perceptions of the delivery of high quality services

because they have major influence on forming expectations and controlling customer experience and as much they cannot be separated from the local point of the actual service (Darby cited in Ashill, Carruthers & Krisjanous, 2005).

By doing this research, it enable us to identify the essential factors, which are personal satisfaction; workload; team spirit; training and professional support that influence the frontline employees' satisfaction at service counter in Sarawak General Hospital (SGH) as a public health care provider. This will lead us to track the frontline employees' satisfaction over time, which can be used as a guideline to identify the satisfaction of service counter employees. In addition, the findings of this study can also help to create a better system or improve the current system to satisfy the employees; the higher the level of satisfaction of employees, the more advantages an organization can gained.

1.1 Background of the Study

Most of the public and private sectors in our country have come together to give support to Malaysian Government when Malaysia Prime Minister introduced a campaign in order to improve the service delivery system in Malaysia including public health care. This campaign was known as Kempen Budi Bahasa dan Nilai – Nilai Murni which was launched on January 11, 2005 (Utusan Online, 2005). The roles of health care institutions now not only provide health care services to its customer, but also simultaneously to provide their services to customers with courtesy.

In addition, as outlined in the Ninth Malaysia Plan (2006-2010), the fifth thrust of National Mission is to strengthen the institutional and implementation capacity of the country as the success of Malaysia plans rest on their ability to be implemented (<http://www.pmo.gov.my>). This strategy is comprised to improve the

public services delivery system at various levels. As a result, all public sectors including the public health care had done many strategies to support the government's plan.

However, there are still many complaints being made on the services provided by public sectors to the customer. The complaints were made either on the provided services or on the person whom provides the services. Lovrenciar (2005) supported this fact by stating that for the over past decade there are complaints, feedback and highlights made on the deteriorating state of Malaysian service standards, especially in customer service which the bulk of the complaints was on the public sector's service counter staff. The services provided by service counters of public health care sector are not exempted. Besides that, Malaysia Prime Minister, Dato' Seri Abdullah bin Haji Ahmad Badawi also mentioned this problem in the launching speech of Kempen Budi Bahasa dan Nilai – Nilai Murni (<http://www.pmo.gov.my>). Prime Minister stated that Malaysian today do face problem with "First Class Infrastructure, Third Class Mentality" which in other words saying that the thinking and behavior of Malaysian is not in line with the development of the country and seems to be decreasing in time.

Thus, in order to provide satisfactory service to the customer, the employees' needs should be fulfilled first, only then they will be motivated to provide their services professionally to customer. It is important to identify what are the factors that would satisfy the employees' needs and therefore, they will put in more commitment into their job.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

There are many studies which had attempted to measure employees' satisfaction in various fields. This can be supported by Schneider and Brief (1992)

who stated that employee satisfaction is perhaps the most frequently studied construct in the organizational sciences, and Cranny et al. (1992) with over 5,000 articles and research dissertations reported on the topic on that point (as cited in O'Neill, 2005). Another evidence is from Davis (cited in Bruhn, 2003) who mentioned that researchers has focused on front-line employees, analyzing the influence of front-line operations on the service quality delivered to external customers.

However, the research of identifying the employees' satisfaction in health care industry of its front-line employees is less studied. Swinehart and Smith (2005) supported this fact by stating that while measuring instruments for assessing external customer satisfaction are abound, the concept of the internal customer is relatively unexplored in the health care arena. Another evidence support was from M. Sadiq (2003) stated that although the published literature contains many references to quality and customer perceptions of the medical profession from a clinical perspective, little research has been conducted into non-clinical aspects of the quality of medical care.

Thus, this study attempt to fill the void as it identifies the employees' satisfaction in public health care which concerns about its frontline employees. Identification on factors influencing the frontline employees' satisfaction are important as the employees' satisfaction towards the job will affect their job performance. This can be supported by Robbins and Coulter (2005) saying that, a person with a high level of job satisfaction has a positive attitude toward the job, while a person who is dissatisfied with the job has a negative attitude. Besides that, this research is also essential as frontline employees at service counter are the key to customers' perceptions towards the organization on delivering high quality services. Frontline employees are the ones who will have direct contact with the customers and thus, they will affect the customers' perceptions, satisfaction and retention towards

the organization. Therefore, the findings of this research will enable the management to take appropriate actions to ensure the employees are satisfied towards their career.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Below are the objectives of doing this research, which are divided into general and specific objectives.

1.3.1 General Objective

The main objective of this research is to identify factors that influence the frontline employees' satisfaction at service counter in public health care.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

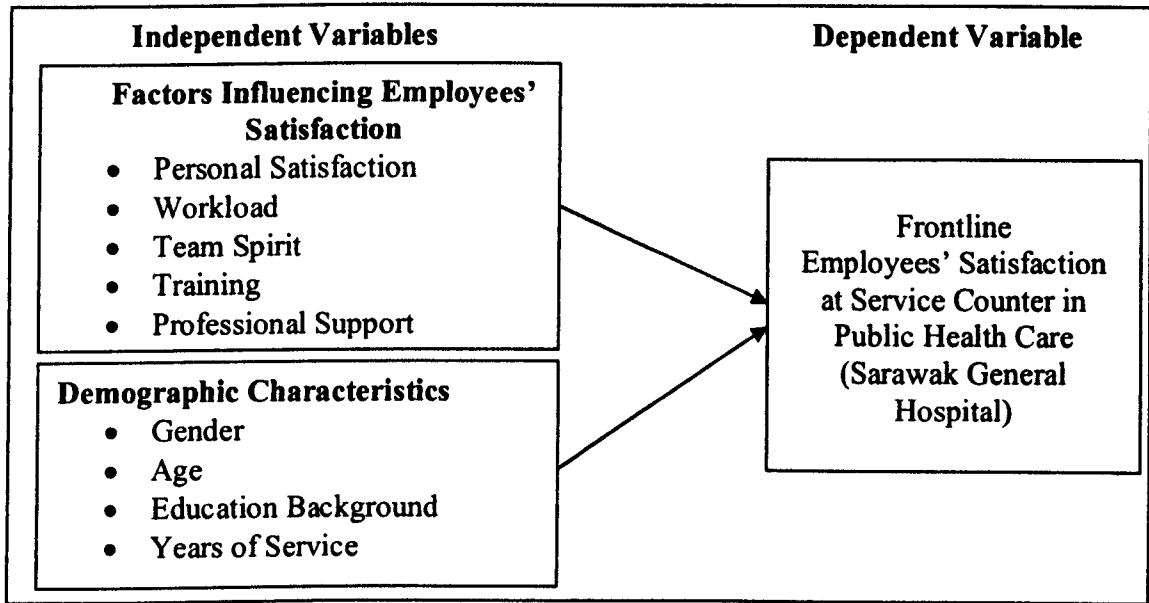
Specific objectives of this research are as follows:

1. To measure the level of satisfaction among the frontline employees at service counter.
2. To identify the essential factor of personal satisfaction in influencing frontline employees' satisfaction.
3. To identify the essential factor of workload in influencing frontline employees' satisfaction.
4. To identify the essential factor of team spirit in influencing frontline employees' satisfaction.
5. To identify the essential factor of training in influencing frontline employees' satisfaction.
6. To identify the essential factor of professional support in influencing frontline employees' satisfaction.

7. To examine the influence of the demographic factors i.e. age, gender, education background and years of service on the frontline employees' satisfaction.
8. To determine most dominant factor that influence the frontline employees' satisfaction.

1.4 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1: The Conceptual Framework of Factors Influencing Frontline Employees' Satisfaction at Service Counter in Public Health Care (Sarawak General Hospital)



The factors influencing frontline employees satisfaction was taken from the Five-Factor Model of Staff Satisfaction developed by Chou, Boldy & Lee (2002).

1.5 Hypotheses

1. Hypothesis, Ho 1
There is no significant difference in frontline employees' satisfaction at service counter in public health care based on gender.

2. Hypothesis, Ho 2
There is no significant difference in frontline employees' satisfaction at service counter in public health care based on age category.
3. Hypothesis, Ho 3
There is no significant difference in frontline employees' satisfaction at service counter in public health care based on education background.
4. Hypothesis, Ho 4
There is no significant difference in frontline employees' satisfaction at service counter in public health care based on years of service.
5. Hypothesis, Ho 5
There is no significant relationship between personal satisfaction and frontline employees' satisfaction at service counter in public health care.
6. Hypothesis, Ho 6
There is no significant relationship between workload and frontline employees' satisfaction at service counter in public health care.
7. Hypothesis, Ho 7
There is no significant relationship between team spirit and frontline employees' satisfaction at service counter in public health care.
8. Hypothesis, Ho 8
There is no significant relationship between training and frontline employees' satisfaction at service counter in public health care.
9. Hypothesis, Ho 9
There is no significant relationship between professional support and frontline employees' satisfaction at service counter in public health care.
10. Hypothesis, Ho 10
There is no dominant factor affecting frontline employees' satisfaction at service counter in public health care.

1.6 Significance of the Study

In today's ever-changing environment, management should be aware on how to attract, retain and motivate employees to perform their job well. The outcome of this research will enable the management to know the factors that play important roles in satisfying the frontline employees' needs and therefore, appropriate actions can be taken to tackle them to commit to their job. In other words, this research can be used as baseline to help management to identify factors that satisfy employees currently and in future.

Another essential reason of doing this research is that, this research will help to find out how satisfied the employees with their current job are. It is important, as it will enable the management to adjust the discrepancies and for management to take appropriate action in order to satisfy their employees and increase the level of productivity.

Besides the data of this research can be applied to service counter frontline employees, the data also can be used in numerous health care areas. For instance is the identification of other frontline employees' satisfaction such as nurses and doctors. A good identification of employees' satisfaction is essential in order to maintain the high productivity of the employees.

1.7 Definition of Terms

Health care

Conceptual Definition

Health care is about meeting the physical, psychological and social needs of a person who seeks care (Raduan, Jegak, Mohani and Kim, 2004).

Operational Definition

Health care is referring to public health care provider, Sarawak General Hospital (SGH) which provides promotive, preventive, curative and rehabilitative care.

Internal Customer/ Employee

Conceptual Definition

An internal customer is defined as anyone in an organization who is supplied with products or services by distinct organizational departments or by persons working in them (Bruhn, 2003).

Operational Definition

Internal customer or employee in this context is referring to all frontline employees at service counter in Sarawak General Hospital.

Employee Satisfaction

Conceptual Definition

Employee satisfaction as a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences (Locke as cited in O'Neill, 2005).

Operational Definition

This is referring to frontline employees' satisfaction at service counter on their personal satisfaction, workload, team spirit, training and professional support regarding their career.

Personal satisfaction

Conceptual Definition

A person's general attitude toward his or her job (Robbins and Coulter, 2005).

Operational Definition

Personal satisfaction here is referring to the frontline employees' satisfaction towards the particular job based on his or her perceptions.

Workload

Conceptual Definition

Workload is a work that a person is expected to do in a specified time (<http://lookwayup.com/lwu.exe/lwu/d?s=f&w=workload>)

Operational Definition

Workload here is referring to the responsibilities that need to be carried out by particular frontline employee at service counter according to job description.

Team spirit

Conceptual Definition

A work environment where job performance depends on groups rather than individuals (Boshoff and Allen, 2000).

Operational Definition

It is referring to level of cooperation and commitment of frontline employees at service counter towards their team.

Training

Conceptual Definition

Training involves the acquisition by employees of the skills, information, and attitudes necessary for improving their effectiveness (Rue & Byars, 2004).

Operational Definition

Training here is referring to the management effort to provide programs which to increase the frontline employees' competencies in order to carry out work.

Professional Support/ Management Support

Conceptual Definition

Management support is a process to influence a particular group to achieve the goals (Robbins & Coulter, 2005).

Operational Definition

Professional support is referring to the effort that management in Sarawak General Hospital made to encourage the frontline employees at service counter to perform well.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

The research was only carried out at Sarawak General Hospital. Therefore, it cannot represent other hospitals or other health care institutions. In other words, the outcome of this research cannot be used as a definite measurement to measure the internal customer satisfaction in all public health care sector or other service counters' employees. However, it can be used as a comparison in the same field.

Besides that, the accuracy, validity and reliability of the data collected also depend on the sincerity of the respondent to participate. Some data might not be accurate, valid or reliable due to time constraint of the respondents to fill up the questionnaire or other reason.

In addition, the hospital culture and environment might be differing from one to another. Hence, it is hard to do comparison among the hospital even within the same function. Somehow, the outcome of this research can act as a reference to the study on measuring the frontline employees' satisfaction in health care services.

1.9 Conclusion

Overall, this chapter introduces the topic of the study, which focused on introduction, background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, conceptual framework, hypotheses, significance of the study, definition of